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# ASCS BACKGROUND INFORMATION



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United States Department  
of Agriculture

Agricultural Stabilization and  
Conservation Service

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## FORESTRY INCENTIVES PROGRAM

### PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Forestry Incentives Program (FIP) was enacted as a result of congressional concern over expected shortage and rising prices of timber during the first twenty years of the 21st century. The objective of FIP is to increase the Nation's supply of timber products from private non-industrial forest lands. The purpose of the program is to encourage landowners to plant trees on suitable open lands or cutover areas, and to perform timber stand improvement work for production of timber and other related forest resources.

The demand for wood in the United States is expected to exceed the supply within 30 years unless many more trees are planted each year and much more forest land is placed under good forest management. Private non-industrial landowners control the majority of forest lands in the Nation, but these lands are not fully utilized. Many landowners do not have the funds to make long-term investments in developing and improving forest areas. FIP is designed to share this expense with private, eligible landowners.

### SCOPE OF PROGRAM

To meet the program objectives and to fully utilize available funds in a cost-effective manner, FIP is offered only in designated counties where a suitable number of ownerships are available that are capable of producing at least 50 cubic feet of timber per year. FIP agreements are limited to eligible ownerships of 10 to 1,000 acres. Landowners owning more than 1,000 but less than 5,000 acres may obtain an exception to this acreage limitation where the Secretary determines it is in the public interest.

## LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

FIP was authorized by the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978 Public Law 95-313 (92 Stat. 367) 16 U.S.C. 2103 Section 4. Funds for the program are authorized annually by Congress.

## PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

FIP and its accomplishments are reviewed annually at the national, State and county levels by the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) in consultation with the Forest Service (FS) and a committee of at least 5 State foresters or equivalent State officials. The program is jointly administered by ASCS and FS in cooperation with State forestry agencies. Cost-share requests and payments are administered by the ASCS county committees with technical forestry assistance provided by State forestry agencies. As required by the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture periodically reports to Congress on the progress of the program through a continuous evaluation of individual investments.

Funds for cost-share use are allocated in each program year to ASC State committees on the basis of a survey of total eligible private timber acreage and acreage potentially suitable for production of timber products. In addition, the ability of a given State to operate the program effectively is also considered.

The ASC State committee, in consultation with the State forester, develops a State FIP program that reflects the State's forestry needs; including a list of designated counties, eligible forestry practices, applicable cost-share rates, and the requirements, conditions, and specifications for the practices.

The State program is submitted to the national level for review and approval. Once the State program is approved, the State ASC committee allots the funds to the ASC county committees who use them to help landowners apply forestry practices on their land.

## AGREEMENTS WITH LANDOWNERS

Program objectives are accomplished by providing cost-share payments and technical assistance to private, non-industrial forest landowners for approved tree planting and timber stand improvement practices. Cost-share agreements between the landowner and the Secretary are based on forest management plans developed by the landowner in cooperation with and approved by the State forestry agency. In development and application of the plan, adequate consideration will be given to enhancing other related forest resources as well as cost-effective timber production.

Landowners apply for participation in the program at the county Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation (ASC) office which asks the State forestry agency to examine the property, develops the Forest Management Plan (if needed) and certify the need for the proposed practice. The State forestry agency provides technical advice and will help locate approved vendors for getting the work accomplished. The State forestry agency must certify that the project has been completed satisfactorily in accordance with the approved plan before payments is made.

The county ASCS office handles all payments earned under the program.

FIP also provides for help in obtaining required technical service for forestry practices through special arrangements with the U.S. Forest Service and the State foresters.

Cost-sharing assistance cannot exceed 75 percent of the actual, average, or estimated cost of performing the practice, as determined jointly by the State Forester and the State and county ASC committee. In some States, assistance is available under long-term agreements of 3 to 10 years.

The maximum cost-shares that a person can earn annually for forestry practices under FIP is \$10,000.

## ELIGIBLE FORESTRY PRACTICES

### FP1. Planting Trees

This practice is intended to increase the production of timber and improve the environment. Site preparation is an authorized part of the practice if certified by the forester as being necessary. Information on eligible species and planting requirements is available from the State forestry agency or ASCS office in participating counties.

### FP2. Improving a Stand of Forest Tree

This practice is aimed at increasing growth of trees on sites suitable for production of saw-timber and veneer logs. Both softwood and hardwood improvement practices will qualify. Pre-commercial thinning, pruning of crop trees, and releasing desirable seedlings and young trees are acceptable measures, as well as site preparation for natural regeneration.

